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"We Are All Federalists, All Republicans"

Max Lerner

Students of the past have long debated whether people make history, or whether it is the other way around. Determinists, for their part, contend that historical forces were at work shaping the course and composition of past societies. Humanists, on the other hand, focus on the human side of the past, examining how the interaction of people and events dictates the course of history. For the humanist, history is in truth—as Sir Walter Scott phrased it—"the essence of innumerable biographies." Part IV of *Portrait of America* follows the humanist view of history and seeks to illustrate Scott's dictum: it attempts to show the course of the young American Republic, from the dawn of the nineteenth century to the Era of Good Feelings, through the lives of some of the leading participants, starting with Thomas Jefferson.

Let us pick up the American story where Cunliffe left off in the previous selection. When John Adams replaced Washington as president in 1796, Federalist leaders were extremely apprehensive about the French Revolution and the anarchy and violence which seemed to characterize it. Might the French virus not spread to America as it appeared to be spreading across Europe? Might not a conspiracy already be underway in the United States to fan the

flames of revolution, to unleash the American mob on Federalist leaders, to destroy the order and stability they had worked so hard to establish? Since 1793, when Citizen Genêt had tried to enlist American men and privateers for the French cause, the Federalists had feared revolution in their midst. Champions of a strong government to maintain order, apostles of elitist rule and the sanctity of private property, the Federalists soon equated the Republicans under Madison and Jefferson with revolution, chaos, and destruction. After all, did the Republicans not support the French? Did they not defend the mob here at home? Did they not call for more democracy in government (although many of their leaders paradoxically were Southern slaveowners)? The harried Federalists barely beat off a Republican attempt to seize the government in 1796, when Adams defeated Jefferson by only three votes in the electoral college. Then, as though the Republican threat were not bad enough, trouble broke out with Revolutionary France. In the notorious XYZ Affair, French agents tried to extract a bribe from American representatives sent to negotiate about deteriorating Franco-American relations. Many Americans thought the nation's honor had been besmirched and demanded a war of revenge. In response, the Federalists undertook an undeclared sea war against France that lasted from 1798 to 1800. Using the war as a pretext to consolidate their power, bridle the Republicans, and prevent revolution in the United States, the Federalists passed the Alien and Sedition Acts. These, they declared, were necessary for the nation's security in the war with France. The alien acts severely restricted the rights and political influence of immigrants, who usually joined the Republicans after they were naturalized and who might be carrying the French virus. The sedition act made hostile criticism of Federalist policies punishable by fine and imprisonment. The Republicans, decrying such government censorship, launched a counterattack against Federal "despotism." The Federalists were so discredited by the alien and sedition laws, and so divided by an irreconcilable feud between Adams and Hamilton, that the Republicans were able to win the government in 1801. Their victory marked the decline and eventually the end of the Federalist Party as a national political organization.

Jefferson liked to describe his rise to power as "the revolution of 1800." But was it really a revolution? True, the Republicans allowed the hated Alien and Sedition Acts to expire in 1801, reduced the residence requirement for naturalized citizenship from fourteen years to five so that America could again function as an "asylum" for "oppressed humanity," inaugurated a new fiscal policy of government frugality and efficiency, and strove to retire the national debt of \$83 million in sixteen years. Jefferson also repudiated the idea of government by and for a political elite. Yet he and his top administrators were as educated, talented, and upper-class as their Federalist predecessors. Moreover, while Jefferson embraced the laissez-faire principle that that government is best which governs least, he found that reversing all Federalist commitments could cause confusion and consternation across the land. Therefore he and his followers permitted the United States Bank to continue operating (it closed in 1811 when its charter ran out) and maintained Federalist measures for refunding the national debt, stimulating American shipping, and assuming the states' Revolutionary War debts. Nor did Jefferson's "Revolution of 1800" change the condition of America's enslaved blacks. As president, the author of the Declaration of Independence, himself a slaveholder, carefully avoided the subject of bondage.

"What is practicable," Jefferson said, "must often control what is pure theory." For Max Lerner, a distinguished student of American civilization, this statement is the key to the essential Jefferson. Lerner's sprightly profile reveals a many-sided man, who had follies as well as triumphs, who by turns was philosophical, practical, passionate, and contradictory, and who still has meaning for our time.

On March 4, 1801, Thomas Jefferson, attended by some friends, walked from Conrad and McMunn's boardinghouse, in the raw village called Washington, to the new Capitol. In a crowded Senate chamber, Chief Justice John Marshall, his old political enemy, swore him in as President.

He was a tall, freckled, redheaded planter-scholar-aristocrat, with a loose-jointed frame, casually worn clothes, strong but kindly features, and an air of gentleness that belied the sharpness of purpose and will behind it. His inauguration marked the first peaceful succession of power from one party to another in a modern republic. But the power base itself was being shifted. What had started as an armed revolution against the British monarchy and had then become a constitutional government of the owning groups was now being completed by the peaceful revolution of 1800 against privilege and the dead hand of the past.

No wonder he had worked hard on his inaugural address, putting it through three drafts, polishing every sentence and phrase. His words were conciliatory in tone: "We are all republicans; we are all federalists." In his manuscript he put it in lower case, meaning the principles of republicanism and federalism, not the parties. Yet the real theme of the address was Jefferson's vision of where the strength (or "energy") of the new American experiment lay—not in the idea of power but in the power of the idea of a self-governing republic, continually remaking itself by the will of the people.

He knew there were fears about him because he wanted to turn power back to the states, cut both government costs and taxes, reduce the army and navy, and retire the public debt. He had repeatedly said "Peace is my passion," which caused many to wonder whether he would expose the new nation naked to its enemies.

His answer was a ringing affirmation of the democratic potential. "I believe this... the strongest government on earth. I believe it to be

From "The Real Mr. America: Thomas Jefferson" by Max Lerner in *Quest* 77, March-April 1977. Reprinted by permission.

the only one where every man, at the call of the laws, would fly to the standard of the law. . . . Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the form of kings to govern him? Let history answer the question."

Every new President starts, in his campaign, as a suppliant at the door of power and ends as a suppliant at the door of history, to learn how it will judge him. And history puts the old and ever-new questions about him: how much power he wielded, and how; what he was like in mind, character, appetites, neuroses, psyche, vision; how many lives he blasted in war, how securely he built the peace. They are the old questions Freud took from the Greeks—of Eros and Thanatos.

There is a streak of Golden Age thinking in Americans, a cult of primitivism which makes them dream of the early days as always the good ones. If anyone should have made a good President, it is the writer, thinker, and statesman who has come down through history as a demigod. Jefferson is the only philosopher-king America has had, unless we include the unschooled Lincoln as a philosopher. He hated kings, yet for a time reigned as an uncrowned one. As revolutionary spokesman and as draftsman of the Declaration of Independence, as Ambassador to France, as Secretary of State under Washington, as party leader and polemicist, he was brilliantly effective. But put to the test of sustained power at the summit, he proved a great man but an indifferent President, a better philosopher than he was a king.

By his nature and conviction he was—in James Barber's classification—a passive President rather than an active one, and an inward-looking one rather than an extravert. His conception of the presidency was not the dynamic one that

Roosevelt, Kennedy, and Johnson made familiar to our own time. It reached back—in his theory at least—to his basic philosophy.

His view of government and society was part of his view of the cosmos—that it had been formed all of a piece by a divine Intelligence and operated by the laws of Nature, that in the moral universe as well as the physical there were laws and principles that men must discover and live by. He had few illusions about man's essential goodness: "The lions and tigers are mere lambs compared with man as a destroyer." He saw man as a predator and prey alike, but he saw governments—unless their tyranny was checked—as the embodiment of the predator. His remedy was a double one: to set limits on the powers and actions of the government, and to educate the people to resist the predators and escape being prey. This meant direct intervention by the people to narrow the powers of government and set up checks and balances on power.

Although he was a revolutionary, he didn't believe that revolutions changed institutions. He thought they were not utopian but purgative: they couldn't create an ideal society, but they could get rid of obstructions from the past, and prevent old forms from hardening into tyrannical ones. Unlike Burke, he had little feel for tradition and the continuities of the social organism over time. This man, himself so deeply rooted in soil, family, party, state, nation, time, kept rootedness out of his political philosophy except in his aversion to cities. He felt, unlike the French *philosophes*, that the present owed no debts to the past and could make no claims on the future. Rarely has America had a thinker for whom the generational struggle was so crucial. He calculated a generational span as 18 years and eight months, and felt that every generation had a right to pry away the dead hand of the past, start with a clean slate, and work out its own lines of development.

This left Jefferson open to a pragmatism which has marked liberalism in America ever since. It gave flexibility to one whose firm sense of principle might otherwise have turned him into a rigid doctrinaire.

In doctrine he did not believe in a strong executive power nor an activist presidency; in practice he tried to hold sway over his administration—effectively in his first term, disastrously in his second. In doctrine he believed in construing the Constitution strictly; in practice, as the Louisiana Purchase showed, he used the Constitution flexibly enough to accommodate an “empire for freedom.” In doctrine he was a champion of legislative supremacy; in practice he kept a tight rein on Congress through his party lieutenants in both houses, with whom he was in constant touch. In doctrine he saw a “happy variety of minds” as part of the scheme of creation; in practice, when the going got hard, he engineered the impeachment of judges in his first term and tried to harass and jail hostile editors in his second.

He played host to all the 138 congressmen at dinner, inviting them in groups of eight or ten from the same party every other day, so that usually (counting the diplomats and others) he had a dozen to eighteen guests. In the village of 3,000 that called itself the nation’s capital, where the social life was sparse and bleak, an invitation to dine with the President was unlikely to be refused. The guests arrived around 3:30, when Congress was through for the day, chatted for a half hour, found places at the round table (there was no protocol: everything was done by “the principle of equality, or *pele-mele*”), and enjoyed a hearty dinner, with good and plentiful wine, and with conversation as the main course throughout.

There were no blessings at the start, no toasts were drunk, and talk of politics was discouraged at any time. The conversation ranged widely because the host, who led it, knew something

about everything and everything about some things. The talk was of travel, crops, farming techniques, animals, music, cities, wines, literature, building, medicine, science, history, fossils, wars, revolutions. “You never can be an hour in this man’s company,” wrote John Quincy Adams in his diary, “without something of the marvelous.”

His dinners were a costly burden to him, but they were also an intellectual delight, an arena for the quiet and effortless display of everything he knew and had done, everyone he had met. Although they were nonpolitical in tone, they were in the deepest sense political—a way of holding his party in Congress together, while undercutting some of the attacks on him that were moving in the Federalist press.

Although a deeply convinced pacifist, Jefferson came to believe in extending America’s “empire for liberty” on its own continent. Dreaming of an American empire of his own, Napoleon had forced a declining Spanish monarchy to cede to him the immense, vaguely outlined Mississippi Valley. This set in motion strong pressures on Jefferson from the frontier settlers, who needed New Orleans as a transshipping port for their products. Jefferson sent James Monroe to Paris to talk about buying New Orleans and west Florida, but before he arrived, Napoleon—his forces decimated in Santo Domingo—had decided to move his imperial ambitions toward the East rather than America, and Talleyrand offered to sell the whole of the Louisiana Territory.

Jefferson was staggered by the new nation’s chance, sudden and immense, to extend its main beyond any dream of the most fervent nationalists. The price—\$15 million—seems tiny to us, but it was four or five times the annual cost of

running the government, and added to the debt Gallatin had whittled down. But the real problem was constitutional, since the President had no explicit power under the Constitution to buy land. At first Jefferson thought of asking for a constitutional amendment, but speed was essential. So he did what history has admired him for: he closed the deal, and rationalized it by saying the people would have wanted him to decide as he did.

When the treaty of purchase came before the Senate, a number of Federalists denounced it as "Jefferson's Folly." Yet later generations of Americans have preferred to see it as Jefferson's glory—the greatest single geopolitical event of American history since the discovery by Columbus.

The new land doubled America's expanse, gave it a structure of agricultural and manufacturing power, and propelled it decisively into becoming in time a world power. It also upset the balance of power between the two major parties, broadening the base of the Republicans and making them a national party with an impulsion westward. While it did not make Jefferson an "imperialist" in today's sense, it made him part of what was to be called the "manifest destiny" of America. Himself a naturalist and ethnographer, and the son of a surveyor, Jefferson sent out the Lewis and Clark Expedition to map the new domain, report on its resources and people, and dramatize its meaning for the rising American national consciousness. He had not abandoned his dream of an agrarian society: he had only found a larger setting in which the dream could be renewed and pursued.

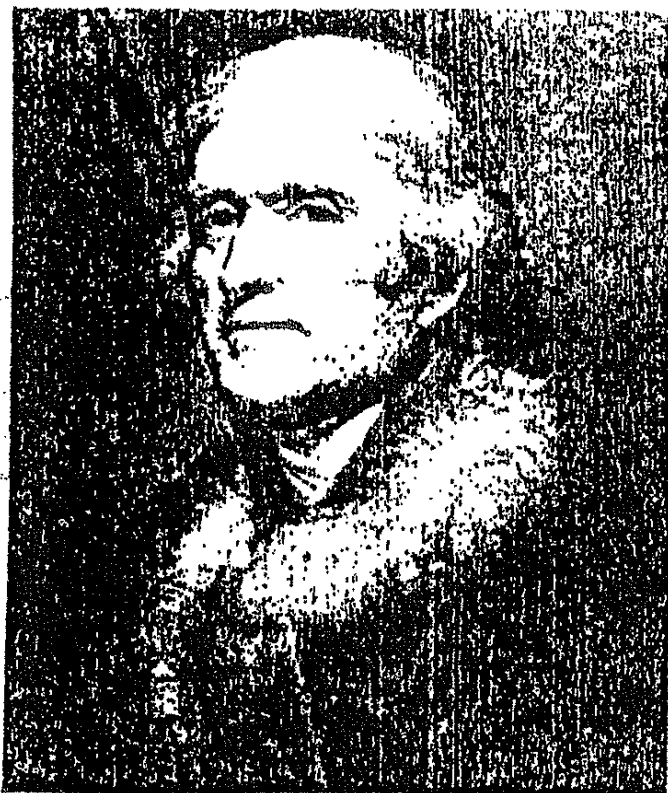
By a stroke of fortune history had offered Jefferson, at an unsuspected moment, a great navigable stream and a vast land empire almost for the asking. Had he been merely doctrinaire, he would have turned a stony face to Napoleon and Talleyrand and rejected the great historic chance because it ran counter to what he had argued and written about the Constitution. But

he didn't, and thereby he laid the basis for the place of his first term in history.

In 1804 Jefferson was overwhelmingly reelected, despite a bitter campaign in the Federalist press against his personal life and morals. He took his success as fresh evidence of the people's mandate. But in 1805 his troubles began. In his first term, very little seemed to go wrong for him. In his second, nothing seemed to go right—not the Burr conspiracy and trial, nor the embargo, nor the impeachment of Supreme Court Justice Samuel Chase, nor his vendetta with the anti-Republican press.

Burr was brilliant, cynical, persuasive, unscrupulous, with a flaring imagination—in short, a fascinating rascal. After being dropped as vice-presidential candidate in 1804, he cooked up a grandiose scheme for carving out of the Louisiana Territory an independent republic over which he could rule. Jefferson could have played it cool, and let the legal authorities deal with his actual conspiracy. Instead he overreacted, made a treason trial out of it, and Chief Justice Marshall—who had outmaneuvered Jefferson in the case of the "midnight judges" in *Marbury v. Madison*—was now able, in presiding over the trial, to apply a strict definition of treason as overt acts of war or betrayal against the United States. The crucial evidence for treason in this sense was lacking; Burr was acquitted, and Jefferson was left looking both foolish and vindictive.

He had an even more hapless time with the French and British depredations on American commerce. It was Jefferson's fate to act out his entire presidential career against the background of swirling struggle between the great European powers—a struggle that locked him into dilemmas not of his own making, presented him with options not of his choosing, and finally proved the undoing of much he had hoped to accomplish.



Thomas Jefferson, an oil painting done in 1805 by Rembrandt Peale. Jefferson was tall and slender, with a freckled face, gray eyes, and short, powdered, red hair. The color of his hair inspired one correspondent to salute him as "You red-headed son of a bitch." Despite his aristocratic upbringing, he was largely indifferent about his clothes, which rarely fit him. A Federalist senator once mistook Jefferson for a servant, observing with a sniff that his shirt was dirty. (Courtesy of The New York Historical Society.)

When the British and French both seized American vessels if they touched at the ports of the other, Jefferson decided to test one of his favorite doctrines—that war was both intolerable and unnecessary, and that the best weapon against both powers lay in economic sanctions. He got Congress to pass a series of five Embargo Acts, stringently forbidding U.S. trade with Britain and France not only overseas but even along the Canadian border.

Not surprisingly, the tactic failed. The British and French were unmoved by a measure that

didn't hurt them decisively. That Jefferson had stripped the armed forces, out of pacifist principle and for economy, made them contemptuous. Within the U.S. there was sporadic resistance, which infuriated Jefferson. It made him turn each new Embargo Act into a Force Act, with searches and seizures by the army and navy. These in turn embittered the resistance, which Jefferson saw as "insurrection."

When an embargo case involving the port of Charleston came before the Supreme Court, and Justice Johnson held that presidential acts were subject to due process of law, Jefferson insisted on his "coequal" power to interpret the Constitution and therefore to defy the Supreme Court view. When a lumber-laden raft in Vermont was snatched away from an army guard and hauled to Canada, the culprits were arrested and—on Jefferson's insistence—tried for treason, to set an example to others. Justice Livingston, himself a Republican, was shocked by the treason charge and lashed out at Jefferson for seeking to use the doctrine of constructive treason in a domestic legislative case.

One must judge Jefferson's embargo strategy a dismal failure as an instrument of foreign policy, and a dangerous adventure as domestic policy. Jefferson's idea of passive resistance to the European blockades might have worked if he had used intermediate means. He could have armed American merchant ships and equipped them with convoys, or used a policy of nonintercourse with Britain and France, or both measures together. The embargo was too broad and ineffectual, and did more harm to the U.S. by paralyzing commerce and manufactures than it did to the offending European powers.

Jefferson made the embargo his personal project, watching over its day-to-day operation but doing little to educate Congress and the people on why extreme measures were necessary. Like so many later American Presidents, he made the mistake of attributing his failure not to his policy but to

the opposition to it. He isolated himself from the people, calling the congressional vote to remove the embargo (just as he left office) a "sudden unaccountable revolution of opinion." The pathos of it was that in 1787 he had mocked the fears about Shays' Rebellion, and had written that "the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time by the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure." When people resist and take up arms, he had said, "the remedy is to set them right as to facts, pardon and pacify them." As President he did none of these.

One must remember about Jefferson that he had a strong will, not easily diverted from its purpose, nor softened by adversity. While out of power, resisting attacks on freedom of criticism, he had achieved some abiding victories. When he was in power, he still had his old sense of being surrounded by enemies, and his strength of will became an instrument of repression. Jefferson in opposition met constantly with his fellow party leaders, exchanged letters with countless colleagues, and was deflected by them from potential blunders. Jefferson in power lost the habit of subjecting his policies to prior criticism and—especially after his reelection victory in 1804—he was confident that the people were with him, and came to equate his own thinking and intuitions with the will of the people.

Leonard Levy, a Pulitzer Prize-winning constitutional historian at Claremont Graduate School, courageously took Jefferson as libertarian apart in his *Jefferson and Civil Liberties: The Darker Side*, to the dismay of the established Jefferson scholars who are protective of him. Quite apart from the Jefferson image, the facts are troubling. A number of Republican theorists of press freedom emerged at the turn of the 19th century, broke with the English common law of seditious libel, and spoke up for a wholly unfettered press, much as Justice Hugo Black was to do in our own time. This new libertarianism was bold and radical, condemning not only prior

restraints against publication but also prosecution after it, and condemning state as well as national trials.

Jefferson was wary of it. He condemned national but not state antisedition action. When, as President, he felt that the Federalist press had reached "licentiousness" and "a degree of prostitution as to deprive it of all credit," he suggested to a Pennsylvania governor "a few prosecutions of the most prominent offenders. . . . Not a general prosecution, for that would look like persecution, but a selected one." There followed the trial of an editor in Philadelphia, one in New York, several in New England. They all failed, and Jefferson looked foolish.

He could veer wildly on the theme of press freedom. He said at one point, "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter." Yet this didn't keep him from harassing editors by prosecution. A few years before his death he found a middle ground in seeing press freedom as "a formidable censor of the public functionaries," and noting that "it produces reform peaceably, which must otherwise be done by revolution."

As President, he was as foolish about politically overzealous judges as about vituperative journalists. The bone that stuck in his throat was the Federalist judges whom the Adams administration had appointed to lifetime jobs in federal courts just as it left office. Many of them were crassly unjudicial. They galled Jefferson because, massively and symbolically, they stood in the way of his transfer of power. He tried to wait them out, or make life difficult for them, but complained that "few die and none resign." His effort at a purge came to a crisis in 1804 with the House of Representatives' impeachment of Justice Chase of the Supreme Court, who had said intemperate things about Jefferson from the bench. The House presented the charge of malfeasance in

office, the Senate sat as a court in 1805, but fortunately—both for Jefferson and for judicial independence—Chase was acquitted. No member of the Supreme Court has been impeached since, although there were rumblings of thunder around the heads of Chief Justice Warren and Justice Douglas.

One may guess that part of Jefferson's thin-skinned sensitivity to his critics derived from their attacks on his private life and morals. At one point a gutter journalist, James Callendar—who had been part of the Republican press stable—failed in his effort to blackmail Jefferson, and then published the story of Jefferson's supposed seduction of a close friend and neighbor, Mrs. Betsey Walker. Jefferson later wrote a friend about the episode: "When young and single I offered love to a handsome lady. I acknowledge its incorrectness." But there is no way of telling whether the husband's charge that Jefferson had made repeated efforts to seduce his wife, or the lady's own charge of a 10-year siege by Jefferson, amounted to more than the fantasies of a wife and the wounded vanity of a husband.

Jefferson's relationships with women have become the thorniest problem for his biographers. He had a strong commitment to his wife, Martha, who died when he was still a young man of 39, and whose death shook him. But the assumption of most who have written about him, that this great and good man must have forsworn sexuality for the rest of his life, doesn't necessarily follow. The efforts to sanctify him, as if he were a spinsterish clergyman figure, do justice neither to his intense, passionate nature nor to his basic character as a complex, many-sided, total person.

The storm has raged around the question of Jefferson's relationship to two women—Maria Cosway, American wife of a dandified British miniature painter, who lived in London and visited in Paris while Jefferson was Minister; and

Sally Hemings, a slave girl at Jefferson's Monticello home, who was also an illegitimate half sister to Jefferson's wife. Jefferson and Maria Cosway unquestionably had a romantic love affair, as evidenced by Jefferson's famous long letter, "Dialogue between My Head and My Heart," which he wrote out of his heartbreak when Maria had to leave Paris for London. They exchanged 25 more letters, described by Fawn Brodie as "the most remarkable collection of love letters in the history of the American presidency." Mrs. Brodie's detailed and scholarly psychohistory, *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History*, argues persuasively that their relationship was sexual as well as romantic, but that neither of the lovers dared make the break into a marriage which both must have thought of.

The scholarly controversy over Sally Hemings has been even stormier, with Jefferson's traditional biographers dismissing as libel the contention that she was Jefferson's mistress from the days of his Paris household and bore him four children, and with Fawn Brodie marshaling her artillery of evidence to assert it was true. The reader who wants to decide for himself must go to Dumas Malone's masterly five volumes on Jefferson's life and to Mrs. Brodie's massive and lively 800-page book. It is interesting that recent black writers, who uniformly attack Jefferson for having continued to own slaves despite his passionate defense of human freedom, are inclined to accept the Sally Hemings story as part of the facts of life about Virginia plantation morals.

My own guess is that they and Fawn Brodie have the better of the controversy. In his relationships with women, Jefferson seems to have been attracted to the difficult and the forbidden. He was trapped in an age, a class, and a society where miscegenation was practiced but severely punished when made public. He couldn't have escaped a feeling of guilt about this relationship, as suggested by his long history of migraine

headaches. This doesn't negate my view of him as a whole man, although a complex and guilt-ridden one. Yeats put it well: "Nothing can be sole or whole/That has not been rent."

A week after he left the presidency, Jefferson (at 66) set out for Monticello, riding for days on horseback and for eight hours through a snow-storm. "I have more confidence in my *vis vitae* than I had before entertained," he wrote Madison. For 17 years he was to live out his life at Monticello, in the groves he loved, on his farms, busy with letters and books and guests, and with a brick factory and mill. He was a world-famous figure. Streams of visitors came to Monticello, some only to see him walk across the lawn. He restored his friendship with John Adams, breaking their long feud, and the two former Presidents—lonely, solitary on the American landscape stripped of most of its Revolutionary leaders—exchanged some 160 letters whose learning, high spirits, and versatility of theme are unmatched in the history of American letter writing. "You and I," Adams wrote, "ought not to die before We have explained ourselves to each other."

Of the two men's letters, Jefferson's are more urbane and mellow, expressing an unshattered belief in man's power by reason and education to make his society work. Adams was more convinced of the force of the irrational in human events. When Jefferson wrote him about his plans for his beloved new University of Virginia, which occupied the last decade of his life, Adams answered with the hope that the twin elements of superstition and force "may never blow up all your benevolent and philanthropic lucubrations. But the History of all Ages is against you."

Jefferson was undaunted. Even the fact that his last years were shadowed by sickness and debts (he was a poor plantation manager and had to sell

his library to meet his obligations) didn't shake his basic optimism. The end came, symbolically, exactly 50 years after the Declaration of Independence he had written. He survived the night of July 3rd, and toward midnight—after a fitful sleep—asked, "Is it the Fourth?" He was told, stretching it a little, that it was, and he fell into a coma which passed into death around noon on July 4, 1826.

In Quincy, Massachusetts, John Adams was also dying, equally intent on lasting until Independence Day. Since he didn't know that Jefferson had died five hours earlier, his last words were reported as being "Thomas Jefferson still . . ." The legend was that he murmured either "lives" or "survives" to end the sentence and his life. There is something eerie about the fact that both men died on exactly the day when the nation was celebrating the 50th anniversary of the independence they had both helped to win. (It was more than coincidence: it was a linked act of will on the part of both.)

Even in his last years Jefferson lost little of his political shrewdness. "Take care of me when I am dead," he wrote Madison, his old comrade in the political wars. Surely few political figures could have needed less caretaking for the judgement of posterity. The legend that crystallized after his death made him out to have been bigger than life, so complex that his name and writings were invoked for every cause—conservative, liberal, and radical angles of vision, weak and strong presidencies. Everyone saw him through the prism of his own political coloration. But of one fact there could be no doubt—the many-sidedness of his devouring mind. As one reads his letters to Adams the breathtaking web of his interests is revealed: in the sciences, linguistics, anthropology, archaeology and fossil remains, the humanities and classics, music, architecture, farming, in the earth and the skies and the meaning of the cosmos, in the dispersion and variety of

the races and their inherent equality as well as differences, in religion, government, aristocracies, morals, education.

As he looked back at his long life, what swam through his crowded memories? He was of the little band of young Virginians who, in their hedonic but intellectually tempestuous life, had shaped themselves into a great governing generation. He had become the spokesman of the American Revolution to the world, drawing on the basic ideas of the European Enlightenment whose child he was, but giving them an analytic sweep and verbal elegance all his own. He had celebrated his state in his *Notes on Virginia*, and his nation in his great public papers. His European education, during his days as American Minister, was an intellectual overlay on his essential Americanism, yet without those European years he could not have become the assured man of the world and statesman he became.

He misread much about the French Revolution

(he was no disciplined social thinker), but his French experience stood him in good stead as he carried through his own "Revolution of 1800." In his struggles with Hamilton, both were romantics; Hamilton romanticized the nation, Jefferson the people. Yet it was Jefferson's hard organizing capacity that made him the victor. I count Jefferson, for all his intellectualizing and his lofty revolutionary sentiments, the most brilliant party leader in American political history—at least until Franklin Roosevelt. The miracle was that he managed to project a public image of himself as once a militant popular leader and a serene philosopher.

In an age like our own, of expanding problems, wary specialization, shrinking perspectives, Jefferson remains witness to the truth that to be a generalist need not keep a man from action, and to be a philosopher need not keep him from power and passion.